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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

(Release on receipt)

SUBJECT: "An Accurate Yardstick For Canned Food" ... Information from officials of the Production and Marketing Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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A big sigh of relief rippled from coast to coast when rationing on canned fruits and vegetables was lifted. Most women will find it easy to reconvert to pre-war buying habits. Many of you who have canned your own fruits and vegetables are apt to be more aware of the quality of the goods you buy.

Have you ever tried to put into words just what you expect when you buy a can of peaches? That's what the Department of Agriculture has succeeded in doing... writing up in detail certain standards for judging the quality of all canned, frozen and dried foods. Those standards...about 85 of them...have been in constant use during the war because Uncle Sam won't buy any canned food until it's inspected and approved by one of his trained men or women inspectors.

Now with the war over you will see more and more of this inspected food on the grocer's shelves. If you're interested in observing the differences in the quality of canned goods, you'd enjoy watching these young women make their tests. At present, about 200 women are inspecting processed foods. That includes canned, frozen and dried foods.

These Women in White, as they are sometimes called because they wear crisp white uniforms, are home economists trained to do this special work. Canners from all over the country request their services. In some plants they give continuous inspection service. That means that they watch each step in the preparation and processing, with an eye to good housekeeping, wholesome food, and accurate methods of canning.

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Other packers want the inspectors to sample their lot of canned goods and report whether or not the food measures up on the Government yardstick. Many a packer offers his stock for sale on the basis of this report.

When these women inspectors have time they occasionally give demonstrations for women's groups, to show just how they inspect a can of food. Perhaps their standards will give you some ideas about choosing canned goods. Briefly, here are some of the tests a Department of Agriculture inspector would show you when she tests a can of peaches.

One of the first tests is made with a vacuum gauge to determine how much suction or vacuum there is inside the can. This gives a clue as to whether the product has been properly processed. Then when the inspector opens the can she gives the juice a sugar test. This year (because of the sugar shortage) all the commercial pack of peaches has been put up in a light syrup just as you've done with your home-canned peaches.

After the sugar test, the inspector compares the weight of the peaches to that of the juice. When you buy a can of peaches you want a good full pack of peaches, and a reasonable amount of juice. Then the inspector turns the peaches out onto a white tray and observes the color of the fruit. She expects the best product to be ripe, and a fully ripe peach is a warm yellow color. Then she notes the uniformity in the peaches, both for color and size. And of course she checks them over carefully for defects...that is, blemishes of some sort from a bruise or knife, or perhaps from an insect or from pieces of the pit.

Another important test concerns the character of the fruit. The best quality must be fully ripe. And last but not least comes the tasting test. If the peaches taste normal...not scorched or oily or sour...they are satisfactory.

Each one of these tests counts toward the final score. The best grade a can of peaches can possibly earn is Grade A. Next best is Grade B. And the last passing grade is C. If you buy your peaches and other canned food from packers who use the Government yardstick, look on the label for a "U. S." grade or the words "Packed under continuous inspection of the U. S. Department of Agriculture."

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★ OCT 2 - 1945

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